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National farmers' alliance

History of the

alliance movement. 1882.

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HISTORY
OF THE
ALLIANCE MOVEMENT.

In the Spring of 1875, THE WESTERN RURAL, alarmed at the rapid strides which monopoly was making toward the absolute enslavement of the producers of the food which its editor and publisher was and is one, determined to do what it could to arouse our farmers to action to the end that their rights might be preserved and equality before the law established. Other questions, such as a equitable system of taxation, a reform in our patent laws, and the prevention of that great outrage upon honest producers—the adulteration of food products, also, urgently demanded attention and action. At that time the farmer had no metropolitan journal to advocate his cause, and with all the power that superior numbers give, he was really helpless and pretty nearly hopeless. The influence of the press and platform was against him, and his efforts to obtain justice were unmercifully ridiculed by both. Whenever he made an effort to devise means for his escape from the encroachments of powerfully backed evils, the language of the press was scathingly severe, and it required far more than ordinary courage for a meeting of farmers to assemble. Within a very few years farmers assembled in council in Chicago and at Decatur, Ill., were so outrageously treated by the newspapers that forbearance almost ceased to be a virtue, and at Decatur a sturdy farmer was so incensed and deeply hurt that he actually did seize a reporter of a Chicago journal, and shook him until the upstart piteously begged for mercy. Under such circumstances, an attempt to champion the cause of the oppressed and maligned, was one of decided danger. Millions of capital, most of the public writers and speakers, and fashion—always a formidable opponent—was on the other side. The agricultural press, capable of doing so much if it would, was content to confine itself to purely agricultural information, and never ventured to resent the insults given to its supporters. There was absolutely nothing in the way of the steady advancement of existing evils to more colossal proportions. The victories which the people had gained in the courts over the railroad monopoly seemed to have been forgotten by our producers, and wholly disregarded by the roads, which were carrying a high and defiant hand. The prospect of utter ruin to a journal, which, single-handed, should take a stand in opposition to all this power, was about as good, and a little better than was that of success, and the only earthly reason—we say it

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for general encouragement—that THE WESTERN RURAL was not ruined and the cause crushed at the very beginning, is that the enemies of the people entirely mistook the temper of the latter, and doubted that the advocacy of their cause would ever amount to anything. It was fully two years before they awoke to a realization of their error, and when they then made an effort to injure THE WESTERN RURAL, which they did in concerted action, it was entirely beyond their reach, firmly backed by an immense and constantly augmenting constituency. But really there did not seem to be a very material difference between being killed outright and dying by degrees. As a farmer, the editor of THE WESTERN RURAL, together with his associates throughout the country, was having the life crushed out of him gradually by the practices of unrestrained monopoly, and if his paper was not an efficient instrument of defense, it was of but little use at best, and he might as well know it first as last. But for his own protection and the protection of his patrons, he deemed it to be his duty to oppose the evils of which the farming community was complaining, and he went at it with a firm conviction that he was right, and relying for success upon the justice of the cause. For months and even years, it was uphill work, in which there were far more discouragements than encouragements. The people awoke slowly. For weeks and months there was no response to the weekly appeals and statements of facts which THE WESTERN RURAL contained. In course of time, however, letters of approval began to come in, and so far as that journal could reach the producers, they became generally aroused.

But it was early seen that something more than simply arousing the people would have to be done. In fact it was but little use to simply convince the people that certain wrongs should be and could be righted, and stop there. Every farmer in the country might be led to see that, but unless there was organization it would result in nothing of benefit. It was clear, therefore, that steps must be taken toward organization. The importance of this THE WESTERN RURAL early referred to and suggested that it be effected under the name of the Farmers Alliance. As the movement was to be a political one, either within the lines of the existing parties or out of them, as necessity might dictate, the organization was designed to be an open one. With principles as true and just as those underlying the present farmers' movement, and it being the intention of securing their recognition through the influences of the ballot, secrecy was not only not necessary, but was not advisable. Nothing of prominence has ever been achieved by secret political action. The only secret political movement ever made in this country was the Native American movement, which was short lived, as it deserved to be. We are not ashamed of our principles, and are able to maintain them in argument against the world. There was and is, therefore, no reason for a secret organization to do what the Alliance proposes.

But although the plan of organization of the Alliance, as proposed by its founder was so simple that anybody, learned or unlearned, could effect an organization, no one seemed ready to take the initiatory step. Considerable correspondence was had between Mr. Milton George and prominent farm-

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ers. No one could be induced to organize the first Alliance. The whole tenor of the letters received by Mr. George was in favor of his taking the first steps, organizing an Alliance among his farmer friends in Cook County, Ill., and having that assume the authority of chartering other Alliances, to the end that the organization might be a unit from the very beginning, until such time as there should be enough Alliances to organize a National Alliance. There appearing to be no other easily practical way of making a start, on the 15th of April, 1880, a meeting of Cook County farmers was held at the office of THE WESTERN RURAL, and Cook County Alliance, No. 1, was organized, with G. A. Houff, as President, C. E. Tuerk, as Vice President, James W. Wilson, as Secretary, and Milton George as Treasurer.

The following Constitution was proposed and adopted:

ART. 1.—This Alliance shall be constituted of at least seven members, who shall be practical and operative farmers, and shall be called Cook County Alliance, No. 1, of the State of Illinois.

ART. 2.—This Alliance shall hold regular meetings at least once a month, and not oftener than once a week. Five members shall constitute a quorum.

ART. 3.—Applications for membership shall be made through a member of the Alliance who shall personally vouch for the applicant as being a farmer and of good moral character. The application shall be referred to a committee of three members, who shall report at the next meeting, unless further time is given. If the committee report favorably or unfavorably, a ballot shall be had by depositing a written or printed ticket bearing the word, Yes, or bearing the word, No—the former admitting to membership, and the latter rejecting. If two-thirds of the members voting shall vote in favor of the reception of the candidate, he shall be declared elected; otherwise he shall be considered rejected. If elected, he shall, to become a member, sign the constitution, and pay a fee of fifty cents.

ART. 4.—The officers of this Alliance shall be a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, who shall perform the duties of such offices as prescribed in Cushing's Manual. After the first election the officers shall be elected at the first regular meetings in July and January, the regular term of office being six months.

ART. 5.—There shall be a Finance Committee, composed of three members, named by the President, subject to the approval of the Alliance, who shall audit all bills before they are paid, and shall examine the books and accounts of the Treasurer, and report as to their condition on the day or night of every election. When the Finance Committee has endorsed a bill favorably, the Treasurer shall pay it, unless objection is made after the Secretary has publicly announced that such a bill has been presented and approved. In that case a vote of the Alliance shall be taken upon it.

ART. 6.—This Alliance may discuss any question of interest to the farmer.

ART. 7.—By-laws may be made not conflicting with this Constitution, and the Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote at any regular meeting.

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Here was the simplest form of organization that could be made practical. The laws were as few as possible, and the officers reduced to the smallest practical number. The purpose to make the machinery as little cumbersome as possible seemed to have been fully accomplished, and Alliances cannot do better than to adopt this Constitution, inserting the name of the particular Alliance instead of Cook County, and the number of the Alliance in place of No. 1.

ORDER OF BUSINESS.

The following order of business was also adopted and is recommended to other Alliances:

1st.—The President, or in his absence, the Vice President, shall call the meeting to order.

2d.—The presiding officer shall direct the Secretary to read the records of the previous meeting, and shall ask if they are correct as read. If there is no objection, he will declare them approved. If there are any corrections he will declare them approved with the corrections.

3d.—He shall then ask if there are any bills against the Alliance. If the Finance Committee have approved any bill or bills, the Secretary shall read them at this time, and if there is no objection the presiding officer shall refer them to the Treasurer for payment. If there is objection to the payment, the President, without a motion, shall say, "The question is upon the payment of this bill," and after discussion, or if there is no discussion, shall put it to vote.

4th.—The President shall ask, "Is there any matter of unfinished business to be considered?" the unfinished business including everything that has been proposed or considered at a previous meeting and not yet settled, unless it is a matter that has been postponed to some other definite time.

5th.—Committees that have been appointed at previous meetings shall report unless otherwise ordered. The President shall call upon the chairman of each committee for a report.

6th.—The Secretary, upon request of the President, shall read applications for membership, when the President shall announce the investigating committee on each case.

7th.—The Secretary, upon request of the President, shall read the report of the investigating committees upon previous applications for membership, after which, the President shall appoint a committee of three to gather and count the ballots, saying, after the appointment of the committee, "Members will now deposit their ballots for or against the admission of Mr. ——— upon whose application the committee has reported favorably (or unfavorably, if such is the fact)." If the candidate is elected, the President, after the report of the committee as to the condition of the ballot, shall say: "The candidate is elected"; if he is rejected, the President shall say: "The candidate is rejected."

8th.—The President shall ask, "Is there any matter of new business to come before the Alliance?" when any member desiring to make any proper motion can do so.

9th.—The President shall ask, "Has any member anything to offer for the

good of the Alliance?" and under this head any member may make such respectful remarks as he may see fit, discussion may be had on any matter of business may be attended to.

10th.—Whenever there is no further business, if no motion is made to adjourn, the President may ask, "Shall we now adjourn?" and may put the question without a regular motion.

This Order of Business is explicit and will greatly aid those who may not be conversant with conducting a meeting. With this Constitution and Order of Business Cook County Alliance commenced operations. It was voted at the first meeting to prepare a form of charter, which should be issued to any seven farmers who desired to thus join the new army. No assumption of authority was made by this Alliance, its action in granting charters being simply for the purpose of holding the organization together until such time as the members should organize a regularly constituted National body. The first charter issued by Cook County Alliance was to Monitor Alliance, No. 1, of Nebraska, which had the following officers: President, J. P. Cook; Vice President, A. S. Allen; Secretary, J. B. Allen; Treasurer, H. Smith. It was but a short time before there was a sufficient number of Alliances to organize a National Alliance, and the publisher of THE WESTERN RURAL offered to bear all the expenses of a convention if the Alliances would send delegates to Chicago to organize a National body. The offer was accepted, and on the 14th of October, 1880, about five hundred farmers, Alliance delegates and others interested, assembled in Farwell Hall, Chicago. This meeting was called to order by Milton George, who nominated for temporary chairman, David Ward Wood, and for temporary secretary, J. M. Chambers, of the Illinois State Grange. At the close of an address by the temporary chairman, the following permanent officers were elected: President, Hon. Matt. Anderson, of Wisconsin; Vice Presidents, Milton George, of Illinois; A. B. Smith, Master of the Kentucky State Grange; J. J. Fuss, of Michigan; and J. E. Colby, of Iowa; Secretary Mr. Chambers. The following States were represented: Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Kentucky and Texas. The day was almost wholly consumed in general convention, in which the questions in which the producer was vitally interested were fully discussed, and the following resolutions adopted:

This convention, representing Granges, Farmers' Clubs and Alliances, and the industrial and shipping interests, affirms, as incontrovertible facts, that the railroad system of this country has become a virtual monopoly, which is defiant of all existing law bearing upon the management of railways, oppressive alike to the producer and consumer, corrupting to our politics, a hindrance to free and impartial legislation, and a menace to the very safety of our republican institutions; that our railroad corporations, while having secured an existence and their franchises through the plea of being necessary for the public good, and in the belief on the part of the people's representatives that the public good demanded it, having been granted the right of way through public and private property, are operating their roads as an entirely private

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enterprise, without regard to the rights of the people and heedless of their pledges to and contract with the State; that they have been aided in the construction of their roads by the government, in public land grants, subsidies, and loans, aggregating in value over \$1,500,000,000, and by town and individual subscriptions to an amount which cannot be accurately ascertained, but is known to aggregate hundreds of thousands, and that although no part of the principal and not a penny of interest has ever in a single instance been paid, these corporations utterly ignore the enormous assessment with which the people have thus voluntarily burdened themselves in their behalf, and assume the right to impose rates for freight and passenger transportation as if the roads had been wholly constructed by the contributions of their individual owners; that their publicly-announced principle of business is to charge as high as the business will bear, which means that freight tariffs shall be maintained at just as high a figure as will not make the shipment of farm produce and merchandise absolutely objectless—a principle so unjust and tyrannical that those engaged in private business enterprises would not dare adopt it; that they compel the producer and shipper to contribute sufficient to pay large dividends not only upon the face value of their bona fide stock, but also upon the face value of large and repeated issues of watered stock; that they organize within themselves independent companies—which manage what are called “fast freight lines”—to do the business which they were organized to do, and thus are enabled to assess the public to pay dividends to two companies, when one could do the business; that they discriminate against individuals and communities, assuming the power, and using it most disastrously at times, to ruin a merchant or a mercantile or farming community; that these corporations have grown so arrogant that they refuse to listen to either remonstrances or entreaties, and that State legislation is wholly inoperative to thwart their designs or to enforce the rights of the public.

In view of these startling facts, and in accordance with the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, affirming the right of the people to regulate the management of and charges upon railroads, this convention resolves,

1. That the producers and shippers of this country in their contest with the railroad monopoly desire only what is right; that they demand that and that they will have it.

2. That while agriculture pays less than four per cent. upon the investment, and the profits of legitimate business enterprises of any character seldom reach ten per cent., we will not pay rates for the transportation of the produce of our farms to market which enable railroad officials to amass princely fortunes, live in extravagance, and pay large dividends upon the face value of their stock, besides having enough from the profits of their business to make improvements and extensions upon their lines, which are often more valuable than the aggregate of full dividends.

3. We demand of Congress a remedy; that it shall place the railroads of the country under government control, enacting laws that will certainly protect the producer from the terrible extortion under which he has so long suf-

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ferred, and that we will hold our representatives in the national legislature to a strict accountability for their action in the premises, pledging ourselves and our constituency to exert ourselves to the utmost to defeat the re-election of any man to any legislative or executive office who does not actively favor in his official capacity the subjugation of railroad corporations to the will of the people.

4. We demand of our respective political parties that hereafter they shall nominate for the State legislature and for Congress only such men as are in sympathy with industrial and commercial interests, and who, if elected, will work and vote to place the producer upon an equal footing with monopolies of every character, and to this end oppose all class legislation; and if our respective parties neglect to do this, we pledge ourselves to use every honorable means to defeat the candidate which they present for our suffrages.

5. We congratulate the Grange and Farmers' Clubs upon what they have done to emancipate the labor of the farm from slavish drudgery to monopolies, and urge them to a continuance of their noble work, which has been so effective in the education of the masses, and such an obstacle to class legislation.

6. We bid a welcome and a Godspeed to the Farmers' Alliance, which joins hands with the Grange and Farmers' Clubs in demanding those reforms which are requisite for the prosperity of the farmer and of the country.

7. We pledge our support to those journals which support us, and urge upon farmers the recognition of the duty to support no paper which is not outspoken in our interests.

At the close of the day's convention, an Alliance meeting proper was organized with W. J. Fowler, Secretary of the New York State Farmers Alliance, as President. A motion to proceed to the organization of a National Alliance was passed and the following constitution was adopted:

ARTICLE I.

SEC. 1.—This body shall be known as the National Farmers Alliance of the United States, with power to make its own constitution and laws for the government of the entire organization in the country.

ARTICLE II.

SEC. 1.—The object of the organization shall be to unite the farmers of the United States for their protection against class legislation, and the encroachments of concentrated capital and the tyranny of monopoly; to provide against being imposed upon by swindlers and swindling advertisements in the public prints; to oppose, in our respective political parties, the election of any candidate to office, State or National, who is not thoroughly in sympathy with the farmer's interests; to demand that the existing political parties shall nominate farmers or those who are in sympathy with them, for all offices within the gift of the people, and to do anything, in a legitimate manner, that may serve to benefit the producer.

ARTICLE III.

SEC. 1.—This National Farmers' Alliance shall meet on the first Wednesday after the first Monday in October, every year, at such place as may be designated by a vote at the previous meeting.

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ARTICLE IV.

SEC. 1.—This National Farmers Alliance shall be composed of its officers, two representatives from every State Alliance, and one representative from every Alliance in any State in which no State Alliance has been organized; provided, however, that upon the demand of any two members of this Alliance, each State delegation shall be required to vote as a unit. The officers elected upon the adoption of this constitution shall be constituted life members of this Alliance.

SEC. 2.—State Alliances, when they exist, shall meet on the first Wednesday after the first Monday in September, every year, and elect representatives to the National Alliance; in those States where no State Alliance has been organized, Subordinate Alliances will elect their delegates at their first meeting in September. Upon the election of delegates by either the State or subordinate Alliance, the President and Secretary shall certify the names of the representatives to the Secretary of the National Alliance, and furnish the representatives with a duplicate certificate.

SEC. 3.—Whenever a State Alliance shall charter a subordinate Alliance, its Secretary shall at once notify the Secretary of the National Alliance of the fact, the location of the new Alliance, and the names and addresses of its President and Secretary.

ARTICLE V.

SEC. 1.—The officers of this National Alliance shall be a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, who shall be elected at any regular meeting upon a majority vote. If more than two candidates shall receive votes, and no choice is made on the first ballot, the candidate receiving the smallest number of votes shall be dropped at every ballot, until only two candidates remain. The voting for candidates shall be by written or printed ballot, unless an election is by unanimous consent.

ARTICLE VI.

SEC. 1.—Seven members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, but less than that number can call this National Alliance together, and adjourn to meet at a future time.

ARTICLE VII.

SEC. 1.—All State Alliances must be chartered from this National Alliance, and bear the signatures of the President and Secretary, and the seal of the National Alliance; in those States in which there may be no State Alliance, subordinate Alliances must be chartered by the National Alliance.

ARTICLE VIII.

SEC. 1.—The President shall sign charters and preside at meetings of the National Farmers' Alliance, when present at the meetings. The Vice President may sign charters, as acting President, and shall preside in absence of the President. The Secretary shall keep a record of the proceedings of each meeting; shall notify State Alliances, when they exist, and subordinate Alliances where no State Alliances exist, of the proceedings of the National Alli-

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ance; shall answer any questions as to the state of the market or the standing of any individual or firm, which, upon inquiry or knowledge he may be able to do, and to exert himself, when requested by the Secretary of any State or local Alliance, to protect and promote the interests of the members of this organization. The Treasurer shall hold any funds that may come into his hands subject to the order of this Alliance.

ARTICLE IX.

SEC. 1.—Members of any other farmers' society may be admitted to our deliberations. All Granges and Farmers' clubs who will send delegates to our annual meeting will be members, and entitled to speak and vote upon any question.

ARTICLE X.

SEC. 1.—This constitution may be altered or amended by a two-thirds vote at any regular meeting.

The election of officers was now proceeded with and the following were elected: President, W. J. Fowler, of New York; Vice President, ———; Secretary, James W. Wilson, of Illinois; Treasurer, Matt Anderson, of Wisconsin. The question of the finances being brought to the attention of the National Alliance, the publisher of *THE WESTERN RURAL* offered to bear all the expenses for that year, and he has continued to do so down to the present time. The work of organization was now fully inaugurated. The President and Secretary, having been authorized to issue the charters, they immediately announced their readiness to grant all proper applications. Cook County Alliance became simply a local Alliance, the National Alliance having become, through the votes of all the Alliances, by their delegates, the head of the organization. A futile objection to the Alliance, made by some of its wild and bitter enemies, that it was being built from the top and not from the bottom—that a supreme body arrogated to itself power over the farmers, is here effectually answered and the insincerity of the objection fully exposed. The Alliances sent delegates to Chicago to organize a National Alliance and those delegates gave it all the power it possesses. Every year they send delegates who have the power and right to make any changes in the constitution and management of the National Alliance that they may wish. In fact there never was an organization that was so absolutely free from bossism as the Farmers Alliance is, and its principal opponents, outside of classes that it is purposely organized to oppose, is found among those who desire to be bosses, but cannot be.

After the organization of the National Alliance, the cause advanced rapidly. In a year's time a thousand local Alliances had been organized—with a membership of fifty thousand, and State Alliances had been formed in Kansas, Nebraska, New York, Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois, and the movement had begun to make itself felt in the politics of the West. At the second annual meeting which was held in Chicago, October 5th, 1881, Iowa, Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Michigan and New York were represented by duly elected delegates, and their reports from their respective jurisdictions were most encouraging. At this meeting, the President, W. J. Fowler, presided and the

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following business was transacted: The constitution was amended as follows: Art 1, Section 1, was changed so as to read, "This body shall be known as the National Farmers Alliance of the United States, with power to make its own constitution and laws." Art. 4, Section 1, was changed so as to read, "This National Farmers Alliance shall be composed of its officers, two delegates from each State Alliance, and one additional delegate for each 10,000 members, or fraction over half that number, who pay their dues, and one delegate from every Alliance in any State, in which no State Alliance has been organized; provided, however, that upon the demand of any two members of this Alliance, each State delegation in which there is no State Alliance, shall vote as a unit."

The following additions were made to the constitution: The office of lecturer was created. Art. 11, Section 1, "Any member of this Alliance and no other is eligible to office in this body." Art. 12, Section 1, "Every member of the Farmers Alliance in the United States, and every member of any society which shall be represented in this body, shall pay to the Secretary of the local Alliance, or society, on or before the first meeting in January, for the support of this National Alliance, the sum of ten cents, and the Secretary of the local Alliance or society, shall forward the money direct to the Secretary of the National Alliance." Art. 13, Section 1, "Any farmers' society that pays into the treasury of this Alliance a per capita tax, as provided in Section 1, of Art. 12, may send a delegate to this National Alliance, who shall be entitled to all the privileges allowed a delegate from an Alliance."

The officers elected at the second annual meeting for the ensuing year were John D. James, of Kansas, President; Matt. Anderson, of Wisconsin, Vice President; David Ward Wood, of Illinois, Secretary; Allen Root, of Nebraska, Treasurer; David Ward Wood, Lecturer.

A committee on resolutions appointed at this meeting, and composed of L. E. Williams, of Iowa, Milton George, publisher of THE WESTERN RURAL, and L. E. Mulholland, of Kansas, reported the following which were unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS, Farmers and others are oppressed by unequal taxation, by subsidies to monopolies, by selfish and dishonest officials, by railroad extortion and unjust discriminations, and by other privileged classes; and

WHEREAS Congress only can regulate Commerce between the States, and a national union of all interested is necessary for success—

Resolved, That the farmers and all in sympathy with them, unite in local, State and national societies for mutual agreement and united action.

Resolved, That all property, real or personal, corporate or individual, should be equally taxed, and that the holders of mortgages and other lines of property should be taxed for their lien, and the owner for the balance of his property.

Resolved, That we favor a just income tax.

Resolved, That the salaries of all public officials should be only a fair compensation for service rendered, that all government positions should be elective as far as practicable, and that the appointment of postmasters and

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other officers by the successful party is a gross violation of civil service reform, and fruitful source of corruption.

Resolved, That we emphatically condemn the practice of receiving free railroad passes by judges, members of congress, legislatures and by other public officials.

Resolved, That it is the duty of the general government to at once exercise its constitutional right to regulate commerce between the States by passing such laws and establishing such regulations as will secure to the whole people just and impartial rates for the transportation of freights and passengers.

Resolved, That the combination and consolidation of railroad capital, and the influence of the United States in the maintenance of an oppressive and tyrannical transportation system are accomplished facts, demanding instant, vigorous, and unceasing action on the part of the producers of the country to remedy the same; and we earnestly urge all farmers to organize through the Farmers' Alliance or other organizations for systematic and persistent political action, and to subordinate other political questions to the emancipation of the people from this terrible oppression.

Resolved, That we demand such changes in our patent law as will give patentees a remedy for the infringement of their claims, from the sellers of patents only, and not from their users, who are usually innocent purchasers of rights which they are made to believe are valid.

Resolved, That all persons should be allowed to make patented articles on payment of a royalty of a per cent. of the price of the article; the royalty to be the same as on all patents.

Resolved, That the adulteration of food is as dishonest and more injurious than counterfeiting money, and should be punished as severely.

Resolved, That as delegates nominating conventions are frequently controlled by trading and bribery, and fail to justly represent the people we recommend the plan of nominating all elective officers by direct vote by all members of the organization.

St. Louis was selected by a vote of the National Alliance as the place for the third annual meeting, and after a vote of thanks to Milton George for bearing the expenses of the National Alliance during the previous year, the second annual convention adjourned.

Since the adjournment of this last meeting, until the present time, which is about ten months, State Alliances have been organized in Minnesota and in Michigan, about a thousand new local Alliances have been instituted, the membership has increased to a hundred and nine thousand and the movement has found its way into new sections, especially at the South. Tennessee and Arkansas have made a most auspicious commencement in Alliance organization, and in the latter State, there is one Alliance composed of colored men. We welcome all who have a vote and will stand by our principles. During the year Missouri has made marked progress, and will soon organize a State Alliance. In Nebraska, where there are between five hundred and six hundred Alliances, there is a strong inclination toward independent po-

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litical action, and perhaps that is very generally true throughout the organization. If existing political parties will not grant the reasonable demands of the farmer—demands which are in no sense partisan—he will enforce them through other political machinery, and it is difficult to see how any one can find a pretext for blaming him for so doing. He is not actuated by the motive of the politician, which is the love of office, but simply wishes his rights and guaranty of equality of American citizenship before the law. Grant him these and he will not care who has given them to him. Deny him these, and he will make trouble for those who are so unreasonable and so unjust. We now have about two thousand Alliances, Nebraska and Kansas leading in number, and the balance pretty evenly distributed among Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, New York, Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, Dakota and Tennessee. The expense of conducting the work, especially of the National Alliance, has been considerable and is constantly increasing. The Secretary of the National Alliance, or a clerk, is compelled to give pretty nearly his whole time to it, and, of course, must be paid from some source; office accommodations must be provided, and must be paid for by somebody; considerable printing must be done and paid for, and the matter of postage is no inconsiderable item. At a reasonable estimate the services rendered in the Secretary's office have cost THE WESTERN RURAL six hundred dollars for the present year; the printing done has been at a cost of nearly a thousand dollars, and the postage has amounted to a hundred dollars. This statement will show the extent of our indebtedness to the publisher of THE RURAL, without whose unselfish assistance, the work would not only have been greatly retarded, but it is difficult to see how it could have been carried forward at all. It is true the constitution of the National Alliance provides for a revenue, but no State has complied with the provision this year, and no money was received last year. It is fortunate for us that we have among us a man who has enough interest in the movement to give it not only the influence of his journal, but material aid material aid.—*Secretary of National Farmers Alliance.*

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Any farmer in any community, who desires to organize an Alliance, should consult with his neighbors, to the number of at least seven, and as many more as he can reach. Having secured the consent of seven or more to join in the movement, issue a personal or public invitation, or both, to meet at any suitable place at a certain time. When the people have gathered, the one who was instrumental in securing the attendance, or any other one, will arise and state that the object of the meeting is to organize an Alliance, with such other remarks as he may choose to make. He will then say: "The first order of business is the election of a President. Will you please nominate some one for that position." When the nomination is made, the chairman will say: "All those in favor of Mr. —— (naming the nominee) serving you as President will say, Aye; contrary minded, No." If the majority vote is in the affirmative, the nominee will be declared elected. If a majority vote in the negative, the nominee will be declared not elected. If more than one nomination is made, the chairman will put to vote the first, and if he is not elected, the second, and

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so on until an election shall be had. The newly made President will immediately assume his position, and after making whatever remarks he may choose, shall say: "The next thing in order is the election of a Secretary. Please nominate for Secretary." After the nomination, the vote shall be taken as for ~~President~~. Vice Presidents may be elected if thought best, but that is not necessary. The meeting is now organized and ready for business. The President shall inquire: "What is the further pleasure of the meeting?" If no one makes a motion the President can greatly expedite matters by requesting some one to make one according to the legitimate order of business. The first business after organization, is a motion such as this: "I move that we proceed to the organization of a Farmers Alliance." If, as before said, no one makes such a motion, the President may ask if some one will do so. This motion passed, the next one in order is for the adoption of a constitution. If it is desired to adopt the constitution suggested for local Alliances in this manual (the constitution of the Cook County Farmers Alliance) some one will move as follows: "I move that we adopt the constitution of the Cook County Alliance, as found in THE WESTERN RURAL Rules of Order." All motions, of course, are to be seconded, before they are put. When this motion is put and carried, the next business will be the adoption of the name of the Alliance. Any one can move that any name he may wish be adopted, and if there is more than one name suggested, the simplest way will be to put the question of the adoption upon the first suggested, and then through the list, until the meeting votes in favor of a name. Now comes the election of officers. Some one will move "that we now proceed to the election of officers." This motion being carried, the President will call for nominations, first for President, second for Vice President, third for Secretary and fourth for Treasurer. The nominations being closed, the chair will appoint three members to collect and count the votes, and will then order the election to proceed, first for President, then for Vice President, then for Secretary and then for Treasurer. The election completed, the next thing to do is to prepare an application for a charter, which application will be made to the Secretary of the State Alliance, if there is a State Alliance in the State, and if not to the Secretary of the National Alliance. The following will answer as a form: To the Secretary of the State Alliance (or Secretary of the National Alliance). The undersigned, being practical and operative farmers, hereby make application for a charter for a Farmers Alliance to be located in the town of _____ county of _____ State of _____ and to be known as _____ Farmers Alliance, No. _____. The officers and their addresses are as follows: President, _____ of _____; Vice President, _____ of _____; Secretary, _____ of _____; Treasurer, _____ of _____.

The applicants, to the number of at least seven, will sign this, and the Secretary will forward it to the proper Secretary who will return a charter, and the Alliance will then be fully equipped for action.—

PROGRAMME FOR ALLIANCE MEETINGS.

It will be necessary to make some effort to keep up the interest in the meetings of the Alliance. There is nothing in any of the laws of the Farmers Alliance which will prevent anybody who is in any way engaged in farming

SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION AT MEETINGS.

operations from becoming a member, and, therefore, the ladies of the farm are eligible to membership. This we regard as fortunate for the well being of the organization, for woman's presence is not only ennobling but she can greatly assist in making our meetings entertaining. We would suggest that a standing committee of three be appointed by the President whose duty it will be to provide and announce at one meeting a programme for the next, and meeting. It would be well if this programme should consist of one subject presented by some one previously appointed, followed by discussion of the subject treated; music, readings, etc. We would suggest the following subjects for essays and discussions: The right to regulate the management of railroads; the injustice of the present methods of taxation; the defects in our patent laws; the incompatibility of the existence of monopoly with the principles of our free institutions; the character of our member of Congress; the necessity of of our representatives in the legislature; the relation of agriculture to the industries; the duty of our government toward the farmer; how our schools can be improved; the wrong of compelling parents to pay high prices to the school book monopoly; the wrong of compelling the producer to compete with the manufacturers of adulterated farm products. L
kind of live stock pays me the best, and why; the profit of the dairy for the farmer; book farming; benefits of an agricultural paper in the family; our duty to support the newspapers which support us; co-operation on the buying and selling; the benefits of organization; keeping children on the farm; horticulture on the farm; making butter; how to make home attractive; advantages and disadvantages of a collegiate education for our boys; the training of our girls; progress of agriculture in the West; what dangers threaten the producer; how much profit do I make farming; the duty of a farmer to take an active part in politics; the duty of the farmer to give himself time for study and recreation; the wives of the farm, and the benefits and detriment of boards of trade.

These subjects will suggest others of like character. So far as practical farm subjects, of which a few are given, are concerned, they are very numerous, and the discussion of any of them will be profitable. If a subject is selected about which there is no division of opinion, let some one or more take the opposite side for the purpose of argument. Intersperse the discussion with readings and declamations by the young people, and with music such as is found in this book or other selections. In short make the Alliance meeting instructive and enjoyable, and it will not be long before all the farmers in your community will be knocking for admission. When the time nears for the holding of the political primaries, the meetings ought certainly to be interesting, without much trouble to arrange for them. The grand object of the Alliance—to secure proper representation for the farmer in the halls of legislation—should not be lost sight of. While we are members of the old political parties, attendance upon and a united effort at the primaries are the only promise we have of remedying existing evils; and if the time should come when a new party or new parties should be organized, which shall more fully represent our principles than do those now existing, it will still be necessary to be vigilant

OUR OBJECTS.

at the primaries. The primaries rule the nation. It is at them that we need to expend our greatest energy; and to do that effectively we must unite upon policies and men. Therefore the character of men whom we propose to support at the primary or who ask our support, should be thoroughly canvassed in our meetings. It is thought best at such times, our meetings can be held with admitting none but members. In all such discussions do not enter into debate, but enter upon the discussion of merits of a candidate, without partisan prejudice, and with the firm determination to select the man that will best represent our interests and the interests of the country. The time was when it was difficult to do this. Men could not bear to hear a member of their party exposed, and they would shout themselves hoarse over a candidate who was destitute of a particle of sympathy for them, and who when they worked and voted constantly with their oppressors, simply because he had political faith. But times have changed. There being no great difference among the people, such as saving the nation from dismemberment, is the sacrifice of every personal consideration of our own personal interests which happen to be, however, the best interests of the country, they do not any longer that it pays to elect men to office who encourage monarchicalism, even if it would be gratifying to our partisanship to see this succeed at the election. All things being equal the democrat would prefer a democrat elected while a republican would prefer the election of a republican. But there is a very wide spread feeling that regardless of such preferences, our individual vote should and must be cast to insure the establishment and maintainance of equality among all men before the law and to guarantee purity and economy in government. This idea is what constitutes the independent voter, and this element in our politics is becoming very strong, needing only concentration to make itself universally felt; and this feeling—this determination to vote for our own benefit and not simply to gratify some aspiring demagogue or to please an unreasonable prejudice, will enable us to sift, in a calm and deliberate manner, the merits and demerits of candidates for office and arrive at a conclusion as to whom we can and cannot support at the primaries.

OUR OBJECTS.

Briefly our purpose is to secure the triumph of the right. We ask for nothing but what is right and just. Railroads are a public institution. They are built for public service. They have been largely built through public contributions, and secured the right of way upon the plea that they were for the public good. Certainly they were never intended to become a means of oppression, and yet that is precisely what they have become. Their charges are out of all proportion to the value of the service rendered, and the farmer in some sections of the country is practically shut out of the market by the extortion which is practiced by these corporations. Justice to posterity, even if we do not regard our own interests, demands from us an earnest effort to put a stop to this unjust assessment upon the producer and indeed upon the public generally. The conflict in which we are engaged is a battle between justice and merciless greed—between labor and concentrated capital. This is the battle which we are waging

OUR OBJECTS.

against bogus butter and other food adulterations; against the claims of bogus or extortionate patentees; against unequal taxation. All the evils that we are suffering spring directly from the greed of capital. Now we have no fight against capital as such. Nearly every farmer is a capitalist to greater or less extent. But capital has no more rights than labor, and it has no right to combine for the purpose of inflicting wrong. It is our undisputed right to prevent this, and it can only be done through proper legislation and an honest enforcement of the laws; and these things can be accomplished only through a united action on the part of farmers, through which we may undo the bad legislation of the past and guard against similar legislation in the future. None of our demands have the slightest appearance of partisanship, and hence we may join hands for the accomplishment of our objects regardless of party affiliation. It is hoped that every farmer into whose hands this pamphlet may come will see the necessity of organizing for the triumph of the right and the establishment of justice.

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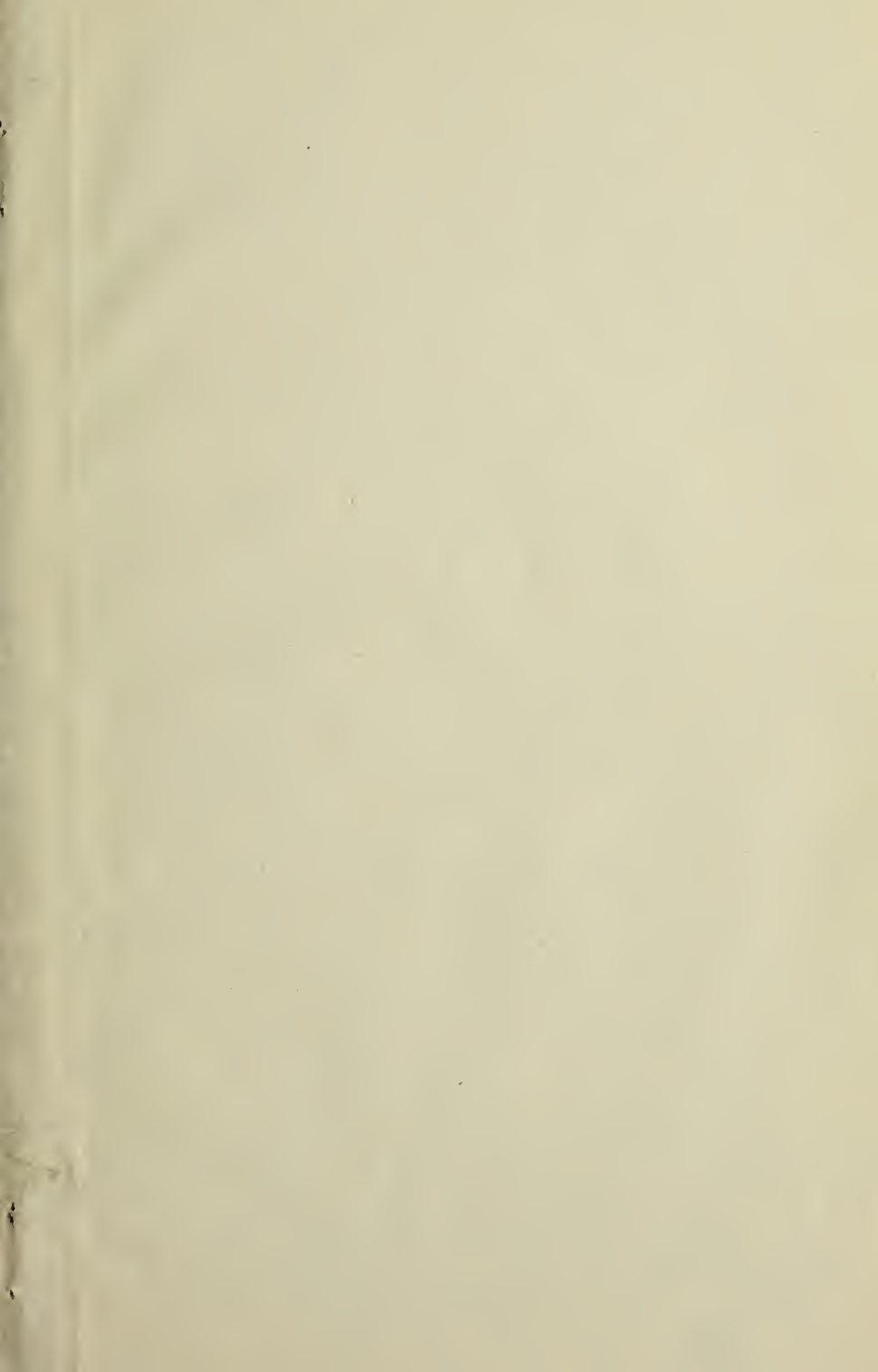
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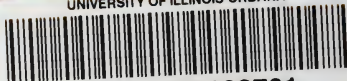
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